Wednesday, May 11, 2011

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Ben Ray Luján of New Mexico's Third District sent a letter today to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development to urge support for the Fuel Cell Technology program, which provided critical funding that contributed to recent advances at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL).

Below is the text of the letter:

May 11, 2011

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chairman
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Energy and Water Development
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Peter Visclosky
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee on
Energy and Water Development
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Frelinghuysen and Ranking Member Visclosky:

As you begin consideration of the Fiscal Year 2012 Energy and Water Appropriations bill, I am writing to urge your continued funding of the Fuel Cell Technology program in the office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy at the Department of Energy at its 2010 level of $174

million. In support of this request, I would like to highlight a groundbreaking project taking place in my district at Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL), where lab scientists have made discoveries that pave the way toward the future elimination of expensive platinum in hydrogen fuel cells.

With funding from the Fuel Cell Technology program, LANL scientists have developed non-precious-metal catalysts for the part of the fuel cell that reacts with oxygen. The catalysts use carbon and inexpensive iron and cobalt instead of platinum to generate performance comparable to that of precious-metal-catalyst fuel cells. In addition, the carbon-iron-cobalt catalyst fuel cells effectively completed the conversion of hydrogen and oxygen into water, rather than producing large amounts of hydrogen peroxide which can reduce power output by up to 50 percent. Developing an inexpensive alternative to platinum catalysts addresses the issue of high cost, one of the main barriers facing deployment of hydrogen fuel cells. These are important results, but much R&D is left to do, and we must stay the course to reap the benefits of this work.

This successful advancement at LANL demonstrates the importance of DOE's fuel cell and hydrogen energy programs. These programs support innovation and economic development while directly contributing to the United States' mission to reduce our dependence on foreign oil and enhance energy security. We must continue to invest in the research and development of clean energy technologies at LANL and at all of our national laboratories in order to bring these technologies to market and make clean energy cost-competitive with fossil fuels.

Thank you for your commitment to advancing clean energy technology. Please do not hesitate to contact me or my office if we can be of any assistance.

Sincerely,

Ben Ray Luján
Member of Congress

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